



A Review of the Application of Foreignization in Literary Translation

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Abstract— This article reviews the application of foreignization in literary translation, explores the evolution, similarities and differences of foreignization views between the East and the West, and their implications for contemporary translators. This article summarizes the attitudes and contributions of various scholars in the history of China and the West towards foreignization, and compares the differences in the use of foreignization between China and the West. Through a review of the perspectives and applications of foreignization in both China and the West, this article reveals the important role of foreignization in conveying cultural differences and promoting cultural exchange, and provides theoretical guidance and methodological references for translators in literary translation practice.



Keywords—Comparison between China and the West; foreignization; literary translation; translation history.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of globalization, cultural exchange and integration have become one of the important characteristics of the world today. In this context, the importance of translation as a bridge for cross-cultural communication is self-evident. Translation is not only the conversion of language, but also the dissemination of culture and the exchange of ideas. Among them, foreignization, as a special translation strategy, deserves our in-depth exploration of its evolution in the history of Chinese and Western translation and the translation concepts it embodies. This article attempts to reveal the cultural, historical, and social factors behind it, as well as how these factors affect the selection and application of foreignization strategies. At the same time, this article will also compare and analyze the differences in the views of foreignization in translation between China and the West, explore their causes and impacts, and provide insights for today's translation practice based on these differences. This article will also explore how to flexibly apply foreignization strategies in literary translation practice based on the application suggestions of various scholars on the concept of foreignization in translation to achieve the

best balance between the original text and the translated text.

II. THE EVOLUTIONARY HISTORY OF FOREIGNIZATION BETWEEN CHINA AND THE WEST

Any translation idea, no matter how modern and novel it may be, is gradually formed. The emergence of foreignization is no exception. It is an extension and expansion of literal translation theory in traditional translation theory, and has undergone gradual evolution in this process. Literal translation mainly describes a translation method that imitates the form and style of the original text, while foreignization focuses on respecting and preserving the language and cultural differences of the source language, and pays more attention to cultural translation. The gradual extension of literal translation to foreignization is a gradual process, and the two are not in a sequential or substitutive relationship. In other words, modern translation studies not only discuss foreignization, but also literal translation. It can be said that the emergence of foreignization is a deepening and

concretization of literal translation in traditional translation studies. Therefore, the two are both interrelated and distinct from each other.

2.1 The Evolution of Foreignization in Western Countries

In the West, the idea of foreignization can be traced back to the word for word translation mentioned by Cicero, Horace, and St. Jerome in ancient Rome, which is the embryonic form of literal translation. Jerome believes that in literary translation, translators can and should use a style that is easy to understand to convey the meaning of the original work, but in Bible translation, literal translation should be the main approach (Tan Zaixi, 2004). Augustine often translated the cohesive forms of prepositions and verbs in Greek as two separate units, indicating that he was more inclined towards literal translation than Jerome, emphasizing the form and structure of words (Tan Zaixi, 2004).

The most famous translator in the early Middle Ages, Manlius Boethius, although neglected the unity of content and style in translation, he considered the connection between literal translation and literary genres, which was a significant advancement in translation theory (Tan Zaixi, 2004). In medieval English translation, translators generally followed the principle of using word for word translation when possible and using literal translation when impossible, and interpreting this principle differently in different situations (Tan Zaixi, 2004). This reflects the dialectical grasp of the relationship between literal translation and free translation by translators in medieval English translation, adhering to the principle of literal translation while reflecting flexibility. This is a relatively mature concept of literal translation, which still has theoretical value to this day.

During the Renaissance, the famous German poet and translator Sebastian Brant elaborated on the method of translating poetry: as long as the rhythm allowed, the translated poem should be translated word for word to give the translation the characteristics of poetry. However, from Brent's translation practice, he did not strictly adhere to this viewpoint in his translation, as there are almost no traces of word for word translation in his translations (Tan Zaixi, 2004). This inconsistency between theory and practice is not an isolated phenomenon. Johannes Reuchlin, a German humanistic writer of his time, adopted a word for word translation method in his translation practice.

In modern times, the debate between literal translation and free translation has evolved into a debate between the ancient and modern schools of thought. Bachet de Meziriac of the ancient school proposed three principles that translators must follow, namely, they must not add

private goods to the original work, must not make additions or deletions to the original work, and must not make any changes that undermine the original intention (Tan Zaixi, 2004). Daniel Huet believes that translators should first focus on the original author's meaning and wording, and try to reproduce their style as much as possible (Tan Zaixi, 2004). Charles Batteux argued for the principle of fidelity and accuracy and literal translation based on language analysis, confirming that "human characteristics" determine the "universal natural word order", and therefore translation rules should "preserve the original word order as much as possible" (Tan Zaixi, 2004).

Through a brief review of the history of Western literary translation, it can be found that although most literary translators tend to lean towards free translation, there have been advocates for literal translation at any time. The early concept of literal translation mainly remained at the level of language meaning and formal style, without involving a wide range of fields such as culture, poetics, society, ethics, and ideology. Over time, literal translation has gradually extended and expanded into foreignization, providing basic clues for the development of Western foreignization ideas.

Friedrich Schleiermacher proposed two completely different translation methods in his speech: one is to bring the reader closer to the original author, and the other is to bring the original author closer to the reader (Lin Lin, 2012). He advocates for the first method, which is the foreignization method, believing that this method can allow readers to appreciate foreign cultures and respect the differences in the source language and culture. This idea is extremely important in the history of Western translation theory and has become one of the important documents of Romantic translation theory. In China, scholars often trace Schleiermacher's ideas on foreignization when exploring the issues of foreignization and domestication.

Walter Benjamin's theory of foreignization in translation extends traditional literal translation to the level of "pure language", enriches the connotation of literal translation, highlights the importance of language form in literary translation, and emphasizes the complementarity between languages (Li Zhiling, 2021). Antoine Berman first proposed the concept of "translation ethics", advocating respect for language and cultural differences in the original work, and advocating the achievement of translation ethics goals through foreignization translation (Berman, Antoine, 1984). Lawrence Venuti's theory of foreignization in translation is the core of his translation philosophy, inspired by Goethe and Schleiermacher, and incorporating the research perspectives of Benjamin and Bellman. It is an inheritance and development of the tradition of

foreignization in translation. Venuti's view on foreignizing extends the literal translation perspective to the levels of poetics, culture, and ethical politics, with richer connotations and positive significance for translation research (Yunhong Liu, 2013).

2.2 The Evolution of Foreignization in China

In China, the concepts of foreignization and domestication have gradually formed with the deepening of understanding of translation, especially as translation is included in the research agenda as a cross-cultural activity. The widespread use of domestication and foreignization terms began after Venuti proposed relevant strategies. Looking back at the history of translation theory in China, it can be found that the debate between domestication and foreignization in contemporary China has gone through the debate over "literary quality" in ancient times, as well as the debate between literal translation and free translation in modern times. This chapter will follow this clue to specifically describe and analyze how the traditional Chinese literal translation theory has extended to today's foreignization translation theory.

In ancient China, the debate between literal translation and free translation was first manifested in the debate over the "quality" of Buddhist scripture translation, which became the embryonic form of the literal translation concept in modern China. Zhi Qian's "Preface to the Dharma Sentence Sutra" reflects the early translation perspective of the "Quality" school, emphasizing the faithful transmission of Buddhist scripture ideas in simple language forms, and opposing the addition of literary talent beyond the meaning of the scriptures (Chen Fukang, 2000). Dao'an's translation theory further emphasizes being faithful to the meaning and content of the original text, and opposes arbitrarily adding literary style to the translation and deviating from the original intention (Chen Fukang, 2000).

In modern times, with the further deepening of translation understanding and the influence of Western translation theories, the debate between "textual translation" and "qualitative translation" has been replaced by the debate between "literal translation" and "free translation". Rightist scholars such as Liang Shiqiu and Zhao Jingshen advocate free translation, while left-wing scholars such as Lu Xun and Qu Qiubai advocate literal translation. Lu Xun's perspective on literal translation already includes the awareness of foreignization in translation, advocating that translation must retain an exotic atmosphere, which is similar to what we call "foreignization" today.

In the late Qing Dynasty, Lin Shu and Yan Fu emphasized the trend of "creative" domestication translation. In the process of reflection and resistance, Lu Xun's views on

language, culture, and translation underwent a transformation. His view on foreignization in translation extends the literal translation theory to the levels of poetics, culture, and politics, injecting new content into traditional Chinese translation theory and expanding the scope of translation research. Lu Xun's view on foreignization in translation was not only inspired by Western thought, but also in turn influenced Western foreignization in translation, such as Venuti's, and had a profound impact on contemporary Chinese foreignization in translation (Gao Yu, 2000).

Besides Lu Xun, his younger brother Zhou Zuoren also agreed with the translation method of "literal translation". Liu Bannong clearly supports the Zhou brothers' literal translation proposition, and Fu Sinian also advocates the strategy of foreignization in literal translation, believing that literal translation and free translation are not opposed, but dialectically unified. In addition, Zheng Zhenfeng and Mao Dun also generally agree with Lu Xun's literal translation view (Chen Fukang, 2000).

Liu Yingkai first defined "domestication" and believed that "English to Chinese translation should be done as much as possible, while Chinese to English translation should be done as much as possible". He pointed out that "domestication" is an extreme form of free translation (Liu Yingkai, 1987). Sun Zhili, on the other hand, explicitly proposed that literary translation should focus on foreignization, with domestication as a supplement, becoming one of the most profound translation theorists in contemporary China to discuss the issues of foreignization and domestication (Sun Zhili, 2002).

In summary, the Chinese theory of foreignization translation has gradually developed its own unique characteristics based on the absorption of Western ideas. The similarities and differences in the perspectives of foreignization between China and the West have further enriched the perspective of global translation research.

III. DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN THE FOREIGNIZATION IN LITERARY TRANSLATION BETWEEN CHINA AND THE WEST

3.1. Similarities between Chinese and Western on foreignization

From a historical perspective, both Chinese and Western perspectives on foreignizing have undergone an evolutionary process. By comparison, it can be found that the two have both similarities and differences.

Whether in the East or the West, the proposal of the concept of foreignization in translation is a reflection on

the mainstream of domesticated translation. In the West, Schleiermacher's advocacy of foreignization strategy is a resistance to domestication translation since neoclassicism. Bellman explains the negative consequences of domestication translation by listing 12 forms of deformation of the original text, and therefore advocates foreignization translation. Venuti discovered through his study of the translation history of English and American literature since the 17th century that domestication translation dominates and reflects the cultural hegemony of English and American cultures. Therefore, he proposed the method of foreignization translation to resist this cultural hegemony. In China, the foreignization method is a reflection and criticism of the domestication translation adopted by Lin Shu and Yan Fu during the late Qing Dynasty. Liu Yingkai, by analyzing the phenomenon of excessive domestication in literary translation in China, clearly points out that "domestication is the wrong path in translation". Sun Zhili argued through rich translation examples that literary translation should adhere to the principle of "foreignization as the mainstay and domestication as the secondary".

Secondly, both Chinese and Western perspectives on foreignization have gone through a process of extending from the linguistic level to the cultural level. Goethe yearns to absorb foreign cultural nutrients through foreignization and create a more vibrant new culture. Schleiermacher hopes to enrich and develop the language and literature of Germany through foreignization. Benjamin hopes to demonstrate the kinship between languages through foreignization, while Venuti hopes to achieve equal communication between different cultures. In China, Lu Xun advocated the truthful introduction of foreign ideas and cultures through foreignization, while maintaining the "exotic atmosphere" of the original text. Both Liu Yingkai and Sun Zhili advocate preserving expressions with distinct cultural characteristics through foreignization.

Thirdly, although the concept of foreignization in translation between China and the West originates from different cultural traditions, both pursue the ultimate ideal of "ethics of diversity". Bellman and Venuti in the West have systematically discussed this "ethics of diversity", while Chinese foreignization theorists, although not systematically elaborated, have implied this ethical ideal in their theories and practices (Sun Zhili, 2003).

3.2 Differences between Chinese and Western on foreignization

Firstly, the Western view of foreignizing adopts a confrontational attitude towards mainstream domestication translation. For example, the two translation methods

proposed by Schleiermacher are binary opposites. The Chinese concept of foreignization adopts a coordinated and balanced approach, advocating "foreignization as the main approach, and domestication as the secondary approach". Sun Zhili dialectically proposed that literary translation should adhere to this principle.

Secondly, the goal of Western foreignization in translation is not to be faithful to the original text, but to maximize the translator's subjectivity and highlight the heterogeneous components of the original text. Bellman believed that the signifier and the signified, as well as the meaning and form, are opposed, that is, retaining the signified form requires abandoning the signified. The Chinese concept of foreignization emphasizes the use of foreignization to make the translation fully faithful to the original text, including the heterogeneous content and language form of the original text (Sun Zhili, 2001).

Thirdly, the Western concept of foreignization in translation magnifies the uncertainty of meaning infinitely, granting translators freedom by canceling translation meaning, thereby maximizing the heterogeneity of the original text. Benjamin, Bellman, and Venuti all proposed that translation is not about conveying meaning, but about showcasing form. The Chinese concept of foreignization acknowledges the uncertainty of meaning, but does not negate its certainty. Instead, it advocates for the maximum reproduction of the original meaning through foreignization translation (Sun Zhili, 2007).

Fourthly, the Western concept of foreignization in translation often overlooks translation practice, leading to theoretical detachment from reality. Benjamin advocates driving readers and meaning out of translation activities, in order to achieve the ideal of "pure language" freedom for translators. This kind of thinking is obviously detached from reality and has a utopian color. The Chinese concept of foreignization emphasizes the combination of theory and practice, which is more suitable for guiding translation practice, making the translation faithful to the original text and taking into account the reader's acceptance ability.

Fifthly, Western views on foreignization rarely consider the acceptance of readers, and even extreme exclusion of readers, believing that the translation is not intended for the readers. Bellman and Venuti's theories hardly address the issue of reader acceptance. The Chinese concept of foreignization in translation emphasizes not only being loyal to the original author, but also taking into account the reader's receptive ability (Sun Zhili, 2004).

Through these comparisons, it can be seen that there are similarities and differences in the perspectives of foreignization between China and the West in literary

translation, further enriching the perspective of global translation research.

IV. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF FOREIGNIZATION ON CONTEMPORARY TRANSLATORS' LITERARY TRANSLATION

In the West, the view of foreignization denies the unity between foreignization and domestication, while the view of foreignization in China emphasizes both opposition and dialectical unity between the two. Xu Jianping and Zhang Rongxi proposed that in cross-cultural translation, foreignization can be appropriately used as a supplement to domestication, while in Chinese English translation, domestication should be maximized to promote communication (Xu Jianping & Zhang Rongxi, 2002). Chen Lili analyzed the reader's acceptance ability, the development of translation methods, and the trend of cultural integration, and proposed that foreignization is the trend (Chen Lili, 1999). However, the necessity of domestication translation should not be underestimated, and translators need to find the best balance between domestication and foreignization. Huang Yanchun and Huang Zhending proposed four general principles for the application of foreignization and domestication, with the principle of "as much foreignization as possible" as the primary principle (Huang Yanchun & Huang Zhending, 2010). Yuan Xiaoning and Liu Cheng believe that translators should adopt either domestication or foreignization translation methods based on specific situations, or a combination of both (Yuan Xiaoning & Liu Cheng, 2002). However, with the advancement of globalization, foreignization will become the overall trend. Xiong Bing advocates that, whenever possible, translators should try to use the method of foreignization or foreignization with interpretation to deal with cultural factor words (Xiong Bing, 2003). After comparing five translation strategies for handling cultural information in the original text, Jiang Xiaohua pointed out that foreignization is the best strategy for conveying cultural factors and has profound significance for cultural dissemination and exchange (Jiang Xiaohua, 2003).

The concept of foreignization focuses on the source language author, emphasizes the translation and integration of heterogeneous cultures, and takes into account the reader's acceptance ability. Therefore, translators should not only follow the principle of foreignization, but also flexibly use foreignization and domestication methods in specific translation contexts.

In literary translation, for sentences with distinct and unique cultural connotations, the principle of foreignization should be followed, that is, to foreignize as

much as possible and convey the foreign cultural characteristics of the original work to the greatest extent possible. The translator should be responsible not only to the original author and faithfully reproduce their true intentions, but also to the target readers, conveying the foreign culture of the original text truthfully. When implementing the principle of foreignization in translation, translators should flexibly apply domestication and play its complementary role. This is determined by the complex factors of translation activities, including the purpose of translation, the subject matter and genre of the original text, the significance and role of cultural content in the original text, the education level and reading purpose of the readers, the historical background and social ideology, etc.

In addition, when translating sentences with distinct and unique cultural connotations, one should have a sense of the times and view their degree and trend of foreignization in conjunction with the development of the times. Translators should not only see future trends, but also be grounded in current realities.

Through foreignization, translators can more realistically reproduce the cultural characteristics of the original text, allowing readers to feel the unique charm of foreign cultures while reading the translated text. This not only helps to enhance the literary value of the translation, but also promotes understanding and communication between different cultures. Therefore, translators should flexibly apply foreignization and domestication strategies in literary translation to achieve the best translation effect.

V. CONCLUSION

This article provides a systematic review of the application of foreignization in literary translation, revealing the historical evolution, core concepts, and importance of foreignization in contemporary translation practice in both the East and the West. It also analyzes the inspiration of foreignization in translation for contemporary translators. The concept of foreignization in translation requires translators to strive for foreignization when translating sentences with distinct cultural connotations, in order to maximize the reproduction of the foreign cultural characteristics of the original work, while flexibly applying domestication strategies in specific translation contexts. Through a review of the perspectives and applications of foreignization in both the East and the West, this article reveals the important role of foreignization in conveying cultural differences and promoting cultural exchange. Foreignization not only enriches readers' cultural perspectives, but also promotes equal dialogue and understanding between different

cultures in the context of globalization, providing valuable theoretical guidance and practical reference for translators in literary translation practice. In summary, the concept of foreignization has important theoretical value and practical application significance in contemporary literary translation, which is worthy of in-depth research and flexible application by translators.

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